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ESTABLISHED A.D. 1841.
Hongkong, 1st November, 1891.

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Correspondents are requested to forward their names
and addresses with communications addressed to the
Editor, not to the public box, as no assurance of good
faith.

THE DAILY PRESS
HONGKONG, NOVEMBER 19TH, 1901.

It is somewhat singular to find a newspaper decanting on the assumed impartiality of other journals criticizing the conduct of Ministers and Governors, seeing that their chief function is to deal with public affairs. An old proverb says that a cat may look at a King, but according to the *Japan Mail* a journalist must not write of high officials. This is what we understand to be the meaning of an aristocratic paragraph which appears in our contemporary's issue of the 27th ultimo. "During more than twenty-five years' experience," says the paragraph, "we have never known so much as one case of a 'British Representative in China or Japan' who did not at some period of his career become an object of attack to the local English press, or to a section of it at any rate. Ministers in Peking or Tokyo, Governors in Hongkong, Charges d'Affaires, or other *lourdes* bodies, one and all have been written of as incompetent and either indifferent to, or incapable of appreciating, the true interests of their nationals. This is a striking generalization, but it is never theless undeniable. When we think of the qualifications of the editors who thus undertake to pronounce sweeping verdicts on the conduct of their country's Representatives and on the management of difficult international questions, the whole thing assumes an exceedingly grave character. Moreover, the 'alarming side' is brought into further relief by another fact, namely, that in several cases the best abuse of these high officials, during their tenure of office, was subsequently raised by their detractors to a pinnacle of confidence and competence. Unquestionably folks have been accustomed to consider that British officials abroad do their duty conscientiously and intelligently. In fact their record so far back as history takes us has been regarded with pride by the majority of their nation. But truth prevails in the end, and even at this late hour of Great Britain's career it is well to let the public know that it is not so far from the truth that at any

rate, her Majesty's Government has chosen its delegates badly, or at all events has chosen men so ill-adapted to the circumstances of the moment that their merits 'become evident only after years of reflection and retrospect.' Our contemporary seems to have very vague views of the uses and significance of journalism. There are few statesmen or high officials of the present day who do not attach importance to the utterances of the Press, not because of any opinion they may have formed of 'the qualifications of the editors,' but because it is a convenient medium through which, not only to feel, but also to influence the public pulse. Recognizing its power in the latter respect, the most prominent statesmen and the highest officials do not disdain themselves on occasion to send unsigned contributions to the Press, where their articles may appear side by side with the productions of obscure individuals of whom the public has no cognizance. It is all the same to the editor who the articles may be written by so long as they contain ideas worth putting into print. Herein lies the difference between the journalistic school of England and France. In the latter the articles are signed, and they are esteemed not according to their intrinsic excellence, but according to the name which appears at their foot. In England, on the other hand, leading articles are usually unsigned and are judged solely by the soundness of their views or the excellence of their diction, without reference to the name of the writer. The *Japan Mail* inclines to the French school, for although the articles which appear in its columns are not actually signed they are all characterized by the same 'individuality' and the paper is looked upon as a public organ but as the mouthpiece of a particular person. Its writing is, perhaps, of a higher average literary merit than that of any other journal published in the Far East, but for the reason named it fails to produce any commensurate practical effect. A general scorn for the foreign press, and foreign opinion is expressed in its columns, and it is not surprising that the scorn should be in some measure returned. The doctrine it preaches is that the Japanese are always right and the foreigners always wrong, and if the latter venture to express dissent from their own officials that is a sufficient reason for our contemporary entering the lists to show them that there too they are wrong. The novelty of our contemporary's contention is equalled by the recklessness of its assertions. It says that "in several cases the best abuse of these high officials, during their tenure of office, was subsequently raised by their detractors to a pinnacle of confidence and competence." If this were true it would be a striking testimony to the honesty of the critics, as showing that they were not influenced by unavowed motives. As a matter of fact, however, we can recall only one case in which there has been any notable reversal of judgment in respect of the character of a Governor or Minister, and that is in the case of the late Sir RICHARD MACDONNELL, Governor of Hongkong, who was subjected to a good deal of adverse criticism during his tenure of office, especially during the early part of it, but who subsequently came to be recognized as a very excellent Governor. We do not, forget, however, that it was Sir RICHARD MACDONNELL that the Colony owed the establishment of the Mint, which was one of the greatest mistakes ever made in our local history. Had that institution been allowed to survive its infancy it would have become a handsome source of revenue to the Colony and have facilitated trade by providing a sound currency. Notwithstanding his mistake with regard to the Mint, however, which indeed was not recognized by the community as a mistake at the time, Sir RICHARD MACDONNELL lived down hostile criticism and carried away with him at the expiration of his term of office the cordial esteem of the public. There has been no similar reversal of judgment in the case of any other Governor. As to the British Ministers at Peking and Tokyo, we can only point to the name of the late Sir HARRY PARKES, the others have all been honorable gentlemen, of course, but as officials they have been weak. The high personal character of the *Japan Mail* claims for them does not by itself in any degree prove their fitness for the office of Minister any more than it would prove their fitness for the position of an engineer. It so happens that at the time when the *Japan Mail* is preaching on the wickedness of criticizing Ministers a very striking instance of the utility of such criticism has transpired. The Austrian Minister has been received in audience by the Emperor at Peking, but not in the *Tzu Kuang Kuo*, or Hall of Tributary Nations, where the humiliating audience of March last took place. Had it not been for the outcry in the Press there is good reason to believe that the Minister would have allowed himself to be beguiled by the *Tzu Kuang Kuo* into an acquiescence in the continuation of the humiliation. It was a disgrace ever to go to the Hall of Tributary Nations, and the Ministers themselves have been brought to recognize it as a mistake. The advice received of the audience accorded to the Austrian Minister is as yet somewhat meagre, but Herr BROXHEIMER was at all events not subjected to the indignity of being received in the hall set apart for the reception of the envoys from Tibet and other vassal states. It is put forward as some palliation for the servility of the Ministers at the reception in March last that they only consented to go to the Hall of Tributary Nations on the condition that a new pavilion should be built for subsequent receptions, but the statement that such an agreement existed does not rest on any absolutely authoritative basis. Whatever may be the fact with regard to that, the Press may certainly claim some credit for having emphasized the inadvisability of the course then taken and prevented its repetition. As a reply to the *Japan Mail's* strictures it would be impossible to do a better example of the utility of Press criticism and of the danger of accepting everything done by officials as correct without question. Our contemporary can hardly have been serious when the paragraph a portion of which is quoted in the *Illustration*

of this article was penned, for it cannot fail to recognize that to entirely disregard the utterances of the Press is as absurd as it is to go to the opposite extreme and believe everything that appears in print. A wise man will take his newspaper simply for what it is worth and weigh its ideas according to his own standard. The Hongkong team will shoot for the inter-provincial match on Thursday, the 20th inst. The Agents (Messrs. Dowling, Carrill & Co.) inform us that the steamer *Chuen Lee* left Singapore yesterday and is due here on or about the 18th inst. We have been favored by the Spanish Consul with copy of the above-mentioned steamer on Wednesday night. There is a depression towards the second quadrant of London. The Agents (Messrs. Arnold, Kerberg & Co.) inform us that the China Shipper *Metals* *Progress*, from London and Liverpool, left Singapore for this port on the 15th inst. and may be expected here on or about the 18th inst. A Hebrew M.S. of the Pentateuch, written by Jews formerly resident in China, on very fine sheepskin, in large, clear characters, with some of the accounts, has recently been sold in New York. The roll is 141 ft. 5 in. long and 24 in. wide. By the O. & O. Co.'s steamer *Polipheuse* there arrived at Singapore a Father of St. Joseph's Foreign Missionary Society of the Sacred Heart, and seven missionary sisters who are proceeding to Bouco for work amongst the Dyaks. H.M.S. *Rattler* (Captain Hough), was to leave Singapore on the 11th inst. for Malacca, where she will remain for five or six days, then she will go on to Penang and to anchor on the Kuala River a message to Lieut. Thibault, who was drowned there. The M. M. steamer *Melloune*, with the French Mail of the 16th October, left Singapore at 6 a.m. yesterday, and may be expected here on or about Thursday, the 19th inst. It is a large ship, being equipped with a powerful engine, and is reported to be a very fast steamer. It may interest local players of the Scottish national game to learn that the *Scottish* national team, which played this year over St. Andrew's, was won by Hugh Kinkaid, the youngest of three brothers of that name, with a score of 185 and 187. The team was captained by William Ferrie, 2nd, for second place. On playing off the St. Andrew's players beat the *Scottish* players. The *Singapore Free Press* says:—It is a little that either Mr. Joseph or Mr. Hough may be pleased at the head of the P. & O. Company's interests at Hongkong, and the vessel, which is the probable man for an Venice, his present position, will be abandoned as a P. & O. agent in December, it is likely that Mr. Hough, being a senior officer, will be promoted to a more important position at Hongkong. The *Illustration* correspondent of the *Mercury*, writing on the 2nd inst. says:—H.E. L. Hough, who has been placed to appoint Mr. Hough as the Managing Director of the C. M. S. N. 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